

IN THE CLAIMS:

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1. (Cancelled).

2. (Previously Cancelled).

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3. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising heating said ~~liquid~~ aqueous solution to a temperature of about 45-80°C prior to said contacting.

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4. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said contacting comprises spraying said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ into contact with said suspended fine solid particles.

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5. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ contains ~~a minor portion of~~ an excipient, an active ingredient and/or other sweetener than xylitol.

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6. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 5~~, wherein a secondary spray of ~~a another~~ liquid containing an excipient, an active ingredient and/or other sweetener than xylitol is simultaneously provided.

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7. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of ~~said the water~~ solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 55-170°C.

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8. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 7 ~~claim 7~~, wherein said water solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content of about 0.1 to 3% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

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9. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said conditioning is maintained so as to allow xylitol microcrystallization to proceed in said composition.

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10. (Currently Amended): A process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said xylitol composition is allowed to settle on a moving belt and to form thereon a substantially continuous agglomerated porous powder layer having a thickness of about 0.5 – 5 cm.

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11. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim 10 wherein said conditioning includes treating said composition in said agglomerated layer with a drying gas having a temperature of about 50-100°C, for a time of about 10-180 minutes.

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12. (Original): The process according to claim 11 ~~12~~, wherein said conditioning is performed in several successive steps with decreasing drying gas temperatures.

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13. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim 11 ~~12~~, which further comprises cooling said conditioned agglomerated layer to provide a substantially flat porous and brittle plate comprising microcrystalline xylitol.

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14. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim ~~12~~, comprising subjecting said plate to a ~~mild~~ comminuting action so as to break up said agglomerated layer.

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15. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, which further comprises fractionating microcrystalline xylitol particles and recirculating at least a portion thereof to provide a feed of said fine solid particles containing microcrystalline xylitol.

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16. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim ~~15~~, comprising recovering microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size of about 0.1 – 10 mm.

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17. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein about 30-70%, ~~preferably about 50—80%~~ of the dried xylitol composition ~~dry substance~~ derives from a said feed of solid microcrystalline particles.

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18. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said solid particles are retained in a fluidized state until they have grown to predetermined weight.

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19. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising recirculating microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size below about 0.2 mm.

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20. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol optional excipients, carriers and/or active ingredients into a pharmaceutical or oral hygiene product.

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21. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol into a tablet with optional excipients, carriers and/or active ingredients by direct compression.

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22. (Previously Amended): The processing according to claim 19 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol into a chewing gum by mixing with conventional chewing gum ingredients.

23. – 39. (Previously Cancelled).

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40. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said ~~liquid is~~ an aqueous solution of xylitol has ~~having~~ a xylitol concentration of 50 – 77% by weight.

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41. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising heating said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ to a temperature of about 55 – 70°C prior to said contacting.

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42. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of said the water solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heating to a temperature of about 80 - 150°C.

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43. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of said solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 90 - 130°C.

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44. (Previously Added): The process according to Claim 6 ~~7~~, wherein said drying gas is air.

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45. (Previously Added): The process according to claim 6 ~~7~~, wherein said solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content below 1% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

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46. - 56.: (Previously Cancelled).

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57. (New): A process for the crystallization of xylitol comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting an aqueous solution of xylitol, said xylitol being present in a concentration of between about 30% and about 80% by weight, with gas suspended fine solid particles containing microcrystalline xylitol;

(b) causing substantial removal of the water solvent of said aqueous solution and allowing the resultant xylitol material to form an essentially solid composition of matter comprising a multitude of microcrystals of xylitol; and

UW 2  
9/17/03  
(c) causing <sup>said</sup> ~~said~~ xylitol composition to be conditioned during a further drying step to provide a product consisting essentially throughout its entire structure of a multitude of microcrystals of xylitol agglomerated together in a random manner.